DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 424 758 FL 025 542

AUTHOR Salies, Tania Gastao
TITLE Compound Verbs in Persian: An Euphemistic Phraseology.
PUB DATE 1998-00-00
NOTE 11p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; Discourse Analysis; Foreign Countries; Language Patterns; Language Styles; Language Usage; *Persian; *Sociocultural Patterns; Structural Analysis (Linguistics); Syntax; Uncommonly Taught Languages; *Verbs
IDENTIFIERS *Compound Words; *Euphemism; Politeness

ABSTRACT

An analysis of the compound verb system of Persian marks constructions euphemistically by producing an indirect order effect and by alternating different compound and simple forms that bear the same denotation but are governed by a rigorous code of ethics. What really carries the semantic reference in these cases is the process of construing polite phraseology. Data were drawn from the utterances of a native speaker of Persian over a period of 3 months. While Persian is a mechanically simple language, it has a rich cultural component that regulates its use for communication. A learner of Persian must also learn the differentiations produced by the use of compound verbs. Excerpts of the subject's speech that especially illustrate Persian euphemistic phraseology are appended. Contains 3 references. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 424 758

Compound Verbs in Persian: An Euphemistic Phraseology

Tania Gastao Salies

Pontificia Universidade Católica do Rio da Janeiro

Running head: COMPOUND VERBS

FL025542

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Tania Gastao Salies
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

In describing Persian syntactic structure, it intrigued me that there were so many compound verbs -- nouns, adjectives, prepositions, adverbs and nominalized verbs combined with auxiliaries as /sodan/ *to become*, /budan/ *to be*, and /kardan/ *to do* or *to make* in their conjugated forms (my data set accounts for 20 different occurences out of a total of 30 sentences -- 66%). Their use produce a very special effect: It glamourizes the constructions, taking the emphasis away from the subject, and placing it on the process of stylistic variation which derives from the Persian cultural ethics. For example, Persians would never say "I lost my book," but "*my book lose made*" -- */ketabamra gomkardan/* -- because, for them, the losing of the book is more important than who lost it. This shift of focus is totally built over the compound verb system, and the result is a very suave, unpretentious construction, extremely culture-specific.

My viewpoint is supported by Windfuhr (1987), Bright (1992), and Beeman 1986). To begin with, Windfuhr (1987), in his description of Persian, refers to such stylistic devices as "causality markers" (p. 538). In his opinion, compound verbs give a slight passive touch to the structure. This is why Persian non-agent active constructions are normally confounded with European/Western passives. For instance, the sentence */xevonat xup vaza dodemisavand/* (animals well food giving became {they}) is erroneously translated as "The animals were well fed." The compound verb creates the impression of a passive structure because it marks

causality indirectly. Actually, it is not a passive construction! The idiomatic translation is "They fed the animals well," because "*food giving became*" is equivalent to "fed," and the personal ending of the auxiliary indicates the subject. Bright (1992), on his part, also reinforces this opinion and offers a very effective example to support the point: */u-ra bidar kard/*. Literally, it means "*him up made*" which is not a passive construction, but a culturally appropriate active construction. Deferential and unassuming. A close examination of this structure shows that the pronominal ending indicates the subject, and that the object is marked in the first position of the sentence. Therefore, a good idiomatic translation, appropriate for our socio-linguistic milieu, would be "He woke himself up."

Moreover, Beeman (1986), in a thorough research of the social morphology and syntax of Persian, also shares the same point of view, adding a social component to it: status differentiation. According to him, besides subliminally carrying euphemistic paraphrases, compound verbs also signals "status-differentiated connotations." To hammer this point, he first indicates that compound verbs have equivalent simple forms, and that simple and compound forms alternate according to the social environment. At this point it is worth noting that simple forms normally are of Persian origin; and compound forms have an element of Arabic origin combined to a simple auxiliary of Persian origin. For example, the verb "to give" */dadan/* has the possible variations */tavdim kardan/*, */loft kardan/*, and */mohaba kardan/*, to name just a few. All forms denote "**to**

give." Nevertheless, a close examination of the arabic roots */tavdim/*, */lofi/*, and */mohabat/* explains their different pragmatic use. The first means offer, the second, favour, and the third kindness. When juxtaposed to the Persian auxiliary, they yield three totally different connotations: to offer make (a self-lowering strategy); to do a favour (a self- elevating strategy); and to do a kind act (an even more self-elevating strategy). Socially speaking, the different connotations are used to distinguish the status of the speakers vis-a-vis the hearers, conforming to the culture map of appropriate socio-linguistic behaviours. In this sense, it would be appropriate for an employee to use the form */tavdim kardan/* when interacting with a superior, and, in the case of the superior, to use the form */loftkardan/*. But both mean "to give." All the compound forms, as well as the referent simple form (which is considered the most neutral), have a single equivalent in English, and therefore yield the same translation.

Secondly, Beeman (1986) picks up motion verbs (*/raftan/* to go, */amadan/* to come, and */budan/* to be) to show how their entire area of semantic reference collapses because of duplicated differentiation established by cultural constraints. These verbs already imply distance or differentiation in their semantic domain, and an additional marker of difference functions as a multiplication of two negative numbers: it yields a positive result, leaving no trace of the negative component. Semantically speaking, the notion of movement is totally lost, and the only element that remains is the cultural ethics implied in the action. In other words, the three verb forms end up by having only one form at a higher status pole (*/sarafraz*

farmudan/ -- to command honor from those to whom one goes), and another at a lower status pole / *sarafyab sodan*/, to be recipient of honour. Actually, they are paraphrases of the neutral-basic form /*rafdan*/ required by the Persian code of ethics. For instance, Persians consider the presence of President Clinton at an event more important than the means he used to get there, or his manner of arriving. Therefore, he doesn't **go**/*rafdan*/, he **honours the public with his presence** /*sarafyab sodan*/; literally, "he is recipient of honour." The compound verb differentiates his higher status through socio-culture-adequate-polite-phraseology, a semantic feature that does not reveal itself in an idiomatic translation, and which is culture-specific.

Conclusion

Persian is an extremely versatile and productive language on the basis of its stylistic variations. For the purpose of this brief paper, we have examined how the compound verb system marks Persian constructions euphemistically. They do so by producing an indirect order effect and by alternating different compound and simple forms that bear the same denotation, but, that are governed by a rigorous code of ethics. In a way, it is possible to say that what really carries the semantic reference is the process of construing polite phraseology.

This discussion reminds me of the close relation of language and culture. And by extension, of the mismatch between mastering the mechanics of a language, and actually using it for communication. Persian, as it is the case, has a very simple mechanics. However, it has an extremely rich cultural component that

regulates its use for communication. Thereafter, the mastery of the verb system does not entail the ability to appropriately use it for communication. To be able to do so, one must learn the meticulous differentiations produced by the use of compound verbs, around which, the whole Persian language is centered.

This findings are fully supported by data I gathered from a native speaker of Persian during 3 months for a descriptive study. In the appendix, I attach the excerpts that particularly illustrate Persian euphemistic phraseology, the topic of this paper.

References

Beeman, W. (1986). *Language, status, and power in Iran* (pp. 132 - 197). Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Bright, W. (1992). *International encyclopedia of linguistics,* Vol 2 (pp.184-188). New York: Oxford University Press

Windfuhr L.G. (1987). Persian. In B. Comrie (Ed.) *The world's major languages* (pp. 538-539). New York: Oxford University Press.

Appendix

Data set

1. *xarmoxe* *ke* *monkenboset// u* *dar xane* ***karmikonet***

   Whenever that possible is // he at home **work make**

   (Whenever that is possible, he works at home.)

2. *an-ha ruje* *prozenhaje* *mortalef* ***karmikonand***

   They on projects different **working make**

   (They are working on different projects)

3. *man* *ketabamra* *dar* *furusga* ***gomkardam***

   I book my in supermarket **lose made**.

   (I lost my book in the supermarket)

4. *man az* *moalem* *rodzebe matole* *be enchom* ***porseskardam***

   I to teacher about material for test **question made**

   (I asked the teacher about the material for the test)

5. *reza* ***kar nemikonas***

   Reza **work no doing**

   (Reza is not working)

6. *karamra* ***taman nakardam***

work (of mine) **end no made**

(I did not finish my work)

7. *man* ***orezu mikonam*** *// ke be xane beravam*

I **wishing make** // that to home go

(I wish to go home)

8. *xevonat xup vaza* ***dodemisavand***

Animals well food **giving became** {they}

(They gave food well to the animals)

9. *dubore az onha* ***stafodekon***

again from bottles **use make**

(Recycle!)

10. u vaxt dost ke **tamrin konet**

she time had to **exercise make**

(She had the time to practice)

11. *Bio der oromez* ***zandagikonim***

Come {you} in peace **life make**

Let's live in peace.

12. *man* ***oresu mikardam***

I **wishing make**

(I wish)

13. *baroder xohan'u-ra* ***gusmikonad***

brother sister his **listening make**

(The brother listens to his sister)

14. ***arz kardam*** *ke gorbera sefi:de ast*

mention made {I} that cat white is

(I said that the cat is white)

15. *Farda be-ei* ***telefon mikonam***

Tomorrow to you **call make**

(Tomorrow I'll call you)

16. ***ejaze midid*** *beraye soma yek ca'i* ***dam konam***
permission have to you one tea **brew make**
(Will you permit me to brew you some tea? >Would like to have some tea?)

17. *momken xedmat-e soma* ***basim beraje sam***
when it is possible service your **for dinner be**
(Is it possible to be at your service for dinner? > Would you like to have dinner?

18. ***xejal mikonam*** *ke estebah karde'id*
thinking make {I} that mistake made{you}
(I think that you have made a mistake)

19. ***ta'ajjob mikardam*** *ke// in mard // koja va cetour* ***zandagi mikonad***
imagination make that this man where and how **living make**.
(I wonder where and how this man live)

20. *harke basad//* ***meil daram*** *ura bebinam*
whoever is {he}// **desire have** him see {I}
(Whoever he is, I would like to see him)